



## **Feminism in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Feminism is a literary movement intended to establish equality in a political, cultural, legal rights and security for women. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison has described the universal gender difference through the young female characters Pecola, Frieda, Pauline and the narrator Claudia. Morrison has mentioned in the novel that three things have greatly influenced her life. Those are of being a child, of being a black, and of being a girl. All these female characters are abused by both white women, white men and above all by black men. This paper tries to explore the multifaceted exploitation and marginalization of women in society.

**Keywords-** Feminism, struggles, male dominated society.

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Feminism is an economic movement intended to establish equality in a political, cultural, social rights of women. It supports equality for women, in their rights and in their welfare. Feminism in Literature aims at exposing the system of patriarchy, the cultural mind set in both men and women which maintains sexual inequality. The thoughts of feminism are expressed in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and cultural Theory* by Peter Barry. He states that "It explores the nature of female world and outlook, and restructures the lost or suppressed records of female experience".(122)

This paper investigates the areas of feminism like portrayal of women. Toni Morrison is a novelist and an editor. Toni Morrison worked as an editor in Random House during the years 1960-70. During the tenure she popularized Black literature and the Black authors and



edited books of writers like Toni Cade Bambara and Gayal Jones. Then Morrison evolved as one of the most important African American writers of the twentieth century. Toni Morrison brings the black people from the margins of their lives into the centre of American life, culture, history and Literature. She disagrees with the situation in the United States of America which claims by giving the full freedom for the African American. So her works explore appropriate to be taken for the African Americans in general and the black women in particular.

*The Bluest Eye* was her first novel published in 1970. The narrator, Claudia Mac Teer, tells the story of Pecola Breedlove, a little Black girl whose irritable desire for love is recognized as an aspiration for bluest eyes and beauty. In the end this aspiration drives her to psychosis. She perceives the image of the white community to be perfect and her own image of the white community to be perfect and her own image to be unusual. Pecola is the representation of the realities in life of a girl in a ruined African American community. The novel opens with an ironic passage from a Dick and Jane School Primer, presenting it as an ideal family to be followed by the Black Children. This idealism seems to be standard for the Black girls who start reading with and splitting up of her awareness into a mental illness of schizophrenia. But Claudia who is psychologically driven outward by showing her anger against the exploitive white society remains sane.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison has described the universal gender difference through her young female characters Pecola, Frieda Pauline and the narrator Claudia. Morrison has gone on to mention in the novel that things have greatly influenced her life. Those are of being a black girl. All these female characters are abused by both white women, white men and even by black men. The African American Literature portrays the suffering of the characters based upon their temperament, their deeds and their intellect. For example it is Pecola's suffering, and self-hatred lead to her insanity in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola is insulted throughout the novel for being black. For example her "Black e mo Ya daddy sleeps naked" (50) which is a great racist abuse. So a light skin complexion is liked Pecola as it is considered as a fundamental quality of physical attractiveness. *The Bluest Eye* also boldly portrays problems as child molestation, The Black women novelists;



especially Toni Morrison has tried in every possible manner to examine women's social roles and experiences in the American society. In her writings, she has strongly resisted the patriarchal and racial suppression of Black women and has also taken an effort in the field of women emancipation and development.

In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola is raped by her father, Cholly. But Claudia and Frieda support her throughout the novel and stand up against the unjust treatment they receive at the hands of society. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison indicates how the careless adoption of the dominant group's values can be determined for African American. The neighborhood boys in *The Bluest Eye* berate Pecola Breedlove for the darkness of her skin, calling her a Black e'mo. In describing the episode Claudia, the narrator remarks that "It was their contempt for their own blackness that gave the first insult its teeth" (50). Barbara Christian, the author of acclaimed book *Black Women Novels: The Development of a Tradition 1892-1976*, demonstrates "how these ideas can invert the natural order of an entire culture, creating a group of people who feel an awful contempt for the colour of their skin and, by implication, their own culture" (152).

In *The Bluest Eye* Toni Morrison says that victims of internalized racism and feminism generally feel inferior to whites, and often wish they were white or looked white. Pecola Breedlove constantly looks for the approval of others and seeks love from them. She asks Claudia "how do you get somebody to love you?" (23).

Morrison puts forward the characters which are evacuated the Margins of the society, in the name of their race or gender; she also brings them out of the anonymity and narrates her own history in her own word. She also addresses the core of African American female and racial, feminist issues in most of her novels.

The girls in *The Bluest Eye* find that their identity is shaped by the imposed worldly views. The girls recognize themselves in a completely negative sense due to their suppressed identities. This suppression of the girls begins at their homes. At home they are children who should be seen and not heard. Claudia explains that adults never spoke to her and they simply gave them directions. At home no one listens or trusts them because they are children after



all. The obstacles which present in front of them are their own families, their communities and the whole world. Thus children especially the females are suppressed into the world. This paper tries to explore the multifaceted exploitation and marginalization of women in society.

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